



Jurong Christian Church

The Vine Committee

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Editor's Word

Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally message sent some unease among a number of Christians. Questions have been asked: Does this mean a considerable restriction to freedom of Christians to share their belief? No more dialogue sessions with pre-Christians? Are Christians right to feel increasingly stifled in the scope of their outreach activities? Will more and more space be classified as public space, thereby shrinking the activity room of Christians?

While the unease is understandable, I am quite sure that the real situation is not as bad as some would imagine. Our Prime Minister is just saying that no religion can impose its beliefs onto the general population; e.g., in regards to homosexuality or gambling. I am also quite sure he did not say or imply that Christians are not allowed to tell people about what they believe in.

The point of the PM's message may also have been misunderstood by some non-religious people. For instance, Sumiko Tan wrote in the Sunday Times: "I hope that the deeply religious, too, can accept that there are people like me who don't like having religious beliefs thrust on them, even if you mean well." Is she saying that sharing of one's beliefs is tantamount to imposing one's belief on another person? She ended her piece with the following: "You should only do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

I just completed a CPR course and one of the things I learnt is that you cannot practice CPR without a certificate and even if you have the certificate, you are not obliged to practice it. That is to say if I find you on the ground without breath or pulse, I can choose not to perform CPR.

Christianity is not a set of practices that will get you to Heaven. It is not that you don't smoke, don't drink, don't gamble, don't eat certain foods, then you can get to Heaven. Christianity is a belief in God. It is generally

right to say that all religions are beliefs. A belief can only be from one's own heart; in other words, a willing personal conviction and commitment. It cannot be "imposed" (by the ordinary meaning of the word). An imposition, even if taken up by the intended person, is of no value. So it is meaningless for a deeply religious person to want to thrust (force) their belief on another person.

When the government fines you for parking or stopping at a double zigzag yellow line, it is an imposition. However when the government places all kinds of unsightly pictures on the cigarette packets, they are just sharing with you what they believe in. Nobody likes to see those unsightly pictures on their cigarette packets but we cannot accuse the government of imposing its will on the people because the people have a free choice. There is nothing wrong for the government to proffer the information about cigarette harm. People are free to accept or decline, agree or disagree with, the information without getting angry with the supplier of the information.

So sharing the Christian faith is like the cigarette illustration. We are just telling it like it is and we are not forcing or imposing anything on the listener. The listener has the free choice of listening or turning a deaf ear.

Coming back to the CPR story, as we lie motionless on the ground, obviously we want someone to come and save us. So if we find someone in such a situation, we must try to save them for the Bible says, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12)

In the press recently, there were many stories about Mediums. The Bible has this to say: "*Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you.*" (Deut 18:10-12)

I am sharing with you what the Bible says. This is information, not an imposition. It is up to you accept or reject the advice from the Bible. However, there is one thing you can only accept but not reject: **the result that goes with any decision.**

Martin Cheah

THE NEW MOON FESTIVAL

The Chinese traditionally celebrate the New Moon Festival (a.k.a. Mooncake Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival) annually in mid-autumn when the moon is said to be at its fullest and brightest. It is familiar to many as the Mooncake Festival because the eating of a Chinese pastry (called “mooncake”) that is round in shape like the full moon is customary during the festival.

New Moon festivals are mentioned in the Bible as times of rejoicing. (Num 10:10) The reasons behind the New Moon festivals in the Bible and the Mid-autumn festivals of the Chinese have their differences. However, I think that feasting on the occasion when people feel joyful at the appearance of the full (new) moon is a common feature. The Psalmist declares, “Sound the ram's horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our Feast.” (Psalm 81:3) King Saul also observed the New Moon with feasting, as is apparent from reading 1 Sam 20.

Christians do not believe in the legend of the Moon goddess. I think that modern-day Chinese also have largely disregarded the idea that every time we look at a full moon, we can see the silhouette of a fairy there.

Christians believe that God created the heavenly bodies – the stars, planets and moons. When we observe the full moon in its glorious brightness, we contemplate the beauty and wonder of God’s Creation. The Psalmist sings eloquently, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.” (Ps 19:1)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years." (Genesis 1:14)

Christians can see the evidence that time and seasons are all wonderfully established by God’s wisdom. The New Moon was a date marker for the Bible calendar of old. The Israelites used a lunar calendar. In the Chinese language, 月 is the character for both “month” and “moon”. The relation between the physical moon moving around the Earth methodically and the abstract notion of time passing through seasons (cyclically) is also never lost to non-Christians. In fact, the date for the feast of Easter to commemorate Christ’s resurrection is actually decided based on a full moon – being the 1st Sunday after the Paschal Full Moon (the full moon next after the vernal equinox).

“From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD. (Isa 66:23)

Ezekiel says, “On the Sabbaths and New Moons the people of the land are to worship in the presence of the LORD at the entrance to that gateway.” (Eze 46:3)

In Bible history, there were times when the New Moon festival was diminished in importance for some reasons. However, post-Exile, the observance of the New Moon festival regained prominence. (Ezra 3:5; Neh 10:33) The ascendancy of the Romans in the apostolic age and the adoption of the Roman calendar again caused the interest in the Moon Festival to wane. Still, there is a call to keep the festival in 1 Cor 5:8.

Nowadays, the New Moon Festival is not an official Church observance. About freedom from human regulations through life with Christ, Paul instructs, “Therefore, do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regards to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” (Colossians 2:16-17)

Although observing the religious festival (New Moon festival) is not a duty for Christians to fulfill, now that the truth of our Christian testimony is found in Christ (and we are not judged by the festivals we observe), it does not mean that we cannot rejoice at the New Moon – provided that we observe the festival through the right lenses. The New Moon festival can be adopted as a useful reminder to us of God’s creation of the heavenly bodies and the way that the calendar has been established by God’s creation. Think deeply: How different would our lives be without the calendar to keep systematic order and enable us to grasp the hierarchy of the moments in time?

Different cultures may celebrate in different ways. In the face of diversity, we can find common grounds for sharing joy and harmony even if there are points we choose to “agree to disagree” or “disagree to agree.” It may perhaps be generally agreeable for baseless superstitions to be cast aside by everyone. Paul says fittingly, “Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with ... the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Cor 5:8)

John Lee

“May you have warm words on a cool evening, a full moon on a dark night, and a smooth road all the way to your door.” – Irish Toast

Winning The War Within

Pastor Andre Butler

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds --2 Corinthians 10:3-4

Paul is very clear in this verse that believers are in the midst of war. But in this war we don't use natural means of fighting because we're not warring against flesh and blood. In other words, we don't pick up swords, spears, or even a gun.

However, we do have weapons. One weapon is the Word of God, and another is the anointing of God. Paul again says that our weapons aren't carnal, or natural weapons. Our weapons are actually spiritual, and they are mighty through God. If we are in war, and we have weapons of war, then we must have an enemy, and our enemy must have weapons of his own.

Be assured that our enemy is going to do everything in his power to destroy us with his weapons. God has given you the ability to triumph over every situation, but Satan is going to come and attack you. You may have already become very familiar with his attacks.

Satan knows that if he allows you to follow God without intercepting you, without trying to impede your progress, eventually you will do everything that God has called you to do, and Satan will lose big time. The Bible, therefore, teaches you to put on the whole armor of God so that you can defeat Satan when he attacks you.

When you're in a war, it's wise to have knowledge about your enemy's weapons so you can prepare appropriately. It's not good to step out in the midst of battle without a clue as to what the enemy's going to do against you. This principle applies to believers as well. Many Christians have struggled and lived on the same level year after year, unable to beat some area in their lives because they don't understand the weapon Satan is using against them.

No matter what your areas are, the battleground that you must win is in your mind. You may not become an expert right away in dealing with this, but if you keep working at it, you'll be vigilant, sober, and alert when Satan comes to bring something your way. You won't let anything through.

God's weapons are stronger than Satan's weapons.
God's Word is stronger than Satan's thoughts.

The weapon that God has given us, His Word, is stronger than any weapon that Satan has. When Satan brings thoughts against your life, you need to recognize that they're not of God. You need to cast those thoughts down and replace them with the spoken Word of God.

This worked every time for Jesus, and it will work every time for you. Trouble cannot defeat you. The only thing that can stop you is you. If you allow Satan to cause you to lose the war within, then you'll be defeated.

Why am I here?

An extract from Nias Missions bulletin Aug 2009 issue:

A couple of months earlier, onboard the propeller plane was my wife and 2 young daughters leaving for Medan. I stood near the airstrip, with my eyes glued to the plane taking off. I kept asking the Lord the all too familiar question, “**Why am I here?**” Soon the plane was out of sight. I turned only to come into contact with three pairs of eyes. Theirs was a look of compassion. These orphans, who had followed us to the airport, comforted me in my separation pain. A few words from them confirmed God’s purpose for my reason for being in Nias. Again I was reminded from James 1:27, “Worship (Ibadah, in Indonesian) that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress....”

I praise the Lord Jesus for constantly reminding me and my family of His purpose for us in this mission field.

Michael Christian

My reflections on IDMC 2009

“If we are going to be wise, spiritual people prepared to meet the crisis of our age, we must be a studying, learning community that values the life of the mind.”

J.P Mooreland

Indeed, to attempt to comprehend a triune God is a thankless task, but does that mean we should give up? I attended IDMC 2009 with nothing in mind except to merely just sit in for a few hours' worth of lectures each day, get a few fun facts out of them and see how it would impact me. At the end of two and a half days, I got more out of it than what I would out of two and a half years.

Reverend Edmund Chen, the keynote speaker for all the plenary sessions was a dynamic man. He spoke with such zest and conviction about God that for a moment, I began to wonder if he and I believed in the one same God. Where were all my convictions and my beliefs? Learning for the sake of being able to answer questions was one thing; learning to appreciate my God was another.

I guess if I were to take home one point out of this whole conference, it would be how important theology is and how we need to apply it in our lives. To quote Rev Chen, it is “not between true and false knowledge, but it's between true and empty knowledge.” Empty knowledge here is defined as head knowledge, without heart response.

We all know the importance of theology, but how far are we actually willing to go for it? Does our Pastor need to constantly remind us Youths to go for biblical interpretation classes or prayer meetings? Should we take bible studies and the importance of theology seriously? For a whole myriad of reasons we can argue that all these are irrelevant, but the fact is, they are, and we are merely giving

excuses to avoid all these “chim” and boring stuff. The problem is that we see ourselves first as physical beings with physical appetites – rather than first and foremost as spiritual beings with physical appetites and that is why we feel that whatever excuses we give are all acceptable.

I am not here to judge, but just to air my views and remind leaders and up-coming leaders of our church, in the words of Rev Chen, “what this generation neglects, the next generation rejects.” Ladies and gentlemen, the onus placed on us is not a light one, and if we ourselves are not putting in effort in taking theology seriously, what can we expect out of our sheep and of the generations to come after us? I strongly urge us to look beyond this generation and think further, for unexamined assumptions shape the intellectual contours of a lazy generation.

The next point I would like to make is the importance of walking the talk. If we really view God as our Father, we would want to MIRROR Him. Mirroring someone is not as easy as it seems. A twitch of the brow, a jerk of a muscle, is all reflected and done by the “man in the mirror”. It is not about remembering God academically, but encountering Him! God wants to be known as our Father, not merely in our heads, but in our hearts too. In due course, when we experience that, we’d naturally reflect Him in our lives, and this is where true and personal testimony lies.

To end, let me leave you with a quote from A.W Tozer, “what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us,” but if we don’t even know God, how can we know ourselves?

Kao Hui Ling

Editor’s Note:

“Chim” is Singlish for Deep

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

Consultation for Innovative Approaches in Youth Participation in Decision-Making

by Mindy Yeo

In preparation for the LWF Assembly in Stuttgart, Germany in 2010, a consultation took place from the 27th – 31st August 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. I was given the privilege to interact with and contribute along with 8 other candidates from Brazil, Canada, Estonia, Nigeria and Sweden. The consultation was facilitated by Reverend Roger Schmidt, Secretary for LWF Youth and assisted by Miss Tsiry Rakoto, Youth Intern for LWF Youth. Revd. Roger is a German while Miss Tsiry comes from the lovely country of Madagascar.

The time spent was extremely fruitful as we considered the theology for youth participation in the Lutheran Church, models for youth participation and the criteria for meaningful youth participation. Apart from brainstorming on the topics mentioned above, there was enough time for understanding the cultures of the different nations through ice-breakers, games, cultural night and casual interaction. It was an eye-opening experience and a good time of reflection for our ministry in our local contexts.



Revd. Schmidt cordially welcomed each participant at the airport at various timings on the 27th August 2009. That evening, the group was introduced to one another for the first time. After a wonderful dinner at the canteen, we had a time of singspiration conducted against a breath-taking background of mountain ranges. The song book contained worship songs from various countries. That evening, we reflected on the disciples' responses to being sent by Jesus to heal and reach out to the masses. **Despite the cultural differences, it was heartening to know that we are united as one body in Christ.**

The next day, we got to know one another better through a series of ice-breakers. In addition, the diverse views that we have even though we have the same faith was demonstrated by our responses to some questions like : “good Christians go to church every Sunday” and “women ought to submit to their husbands”. We were also given the permission to lapse into our comfort zone by communicating in our native language to a participant we were paired with. This activity helped us to see the importance of understanding one another through non-verbal means and explore other means of communication.

Prior to beginning any further discussion, we started with a Bible study so that the subsequent discussion would be rooted on the Word of God. With the God's Word as the basis, we began to think about the theological reasons behind youth participation. There were references made to God's call to Jeremiah and His assurances to Him. We also agreed that as many parts of the body of Christ, there is no one part that is less significant than the others. With the affirmation that youth can contribute in the same capacity as adults, we proceeded to examine a case study of building a church. Through this exercise, we were able to see that youth are more involved in hands-on processes in providing labour or fund-raising initiatives.

We also discussed the criteria that are necessary for meaningful youth participation. One point that was brought out during this time was the need to provide a platform for youth to speak and be heard so that words become reality. During this discussion, we also recognised that training and development is needed so that the youth can contribute constructively with an informed mind. Even while we advocate that youth be given the freedom to speak and the privilege to be heard, we understood the need to do all things in love and to acknowledge that unity must prevail in diversity.

The third stage of discussion centred on some proposed models that involve youth participation. The 3 models that are suggested include informal inclusion, formal inclusion as well as fostering strong youth organisation. As I reflected on our local context, I was thankful that our predecessors have had the foresight to foster strong youth organisation by starting the youth service. This allowed youth to serve and lead. While this is very empowering for young people, we also acknowledge that there is a need for experienced adults who can guide and mentor us so that our fullest potential can be met.

As we aimed to practise what we preached about criteria for youth participation, fun was included also in the midst of work. Rev. Roger conducted an LWF quiz that was entertaining and at the same time informative. I learnt the theme for the LWF Assembly 2010, which was "Give Us Today Our Daily Bread"; apart from simply talking about theology, the LWF is very involved with the social needs of the world like poverty, AIDS/HIV, environment issues, etc. This is a demonstration of caring for our neighbours and being good stewards for our Father's creation.

On Sunday, we visited the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva. The liturgical service was very dynamic with international hymns and worship songs being sung unto the Lord. During the offertory, a lady offered her gift of singing by

presenting a song with a gentleman whose nimble fingers worked the strings of the guitar beautifully. Even though it was a melting pot with worshippers gathered from all over the world, everyone was united through the object of worship – God.

Before we concluded our meeting, there was a visit to the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva. There, the World Council of Churches had congregated and it opened my eyes to see how churches worldwide are so actively engaged in social concerns. The Christian is not detached from the needs of a world that cries out not only for spiritual nourishment but physical helps too. The centre also houses the LWF office and we were given the honour to meet the General Secretary of LWF, Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko, who shared with us on the beginnings of youth participation in the LWF. He also reminded us that baptism has united us and conferred the same privileges and responsibilities regardless of age. We also met up with the Director for the Department of Mission and Development who was humbly serving tea and coffee at Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva on Sundays while leading a department on working days.

Apart from working hard, we played too. At cultural night, we were introduced to the rhythmic Nigerian beat, Brazilian samba, Swedish animals, Canadian icons, German storytelling, Madagascar landscape and Estonian songs. In an attempt to leave an impression, I unwisely violated the taste-buds of my new-found friends with durian sweets. The deeply-etched idea that was imprinted in their head was the pungent smell that caused one to conclude, “Singapore is a clean but smelly country.” I am sorry, Singapore Tourism Board, you sure have some restorative work to do.

All in all, it was an extremely fulfilling trip as I got to listen to the experiences of Christians from all continents. This trip has caused me to understand that the interpretation of our beliefs is shaped by our social and cultural context. Rev. Roger has also made the meeting a very meaningful one by conducting all sessions in a purposeful manner so that we are led into fruitful times of discussions and interactions. Gleaning from the experiences of the other youth leaders have also broaden my knowledge of engaging youth. In Rev. Dr. Ishmael Noko’s words, “The future is born from the past.” May we remember that the youth today will grow to be the future leaders who would shape further generations and let no effort be spared in preparing the future.

If you are excited to meet with Lutherans worldwide, these are some connective websites.

The Lutheran World Federation Website
<http://www.lutheranworld.org/>

LWF Youth Blog
<http://lwfyouth.org/>

LWF Youth on Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/LWF-Youth-The-Lutheran-World-Federation/11307734826?v=wall&views=577249376>

Some reflections for Theological Insights to Youth Participation

Participants
From left : Jeff, Tsiry, Carla (front), Cassandra, Erik, Mindy, Kristjan, Roger, Siry (back), Mfonobong and Celina



TRUST

"I just don't understand," Tom lamented. "My board is saying they don't trust me. But I'm not dishonest, and I would never intentionally do anything to hurt my church because God clearly called me to plant Community Fellowship."

Tom didn't know what to do, but he definitely knew something wasn't quite right. Although his church was experiencing explosive growth, Tom was perplexed by criticisms of his ministry at the leadership level. Board meetings were growing increasingly tense, and questions of Tom's integrity became more frequent. The more insecure he felt, the less he communicated with his board, which led to even louder murmuring among those "in the know" at the church. But Tom had no idea how this had happened, or what could be done to change it.

Tom's situation is not unique. In my work with churches and ministry leaders, I have frequently discovered an underlying current of mistrust within the organization, a current that subtly but surely erodes a church's foundation.

Trust is critical to a church's health and, ultimately, to its ministry effectiveness. When people in a church don't trust each other or their leaders, the church becomes a diseased organism that will poison those who come into contact with it, or shrivel up and stop producing fruit—often times both.

And while mistrust can and does exist at all levels within a church, its leaders generally set the tone for organizational health. Unfortunately, many leaders do not realize that trust has several key components. This misunderstanding becomes clear in situations like Tom's. Often times, when a leader is told that she is not trustworthy, she mistakenly takes it to mean that she is being accused of dishonesty or deceit.

But I've become convinced that a leader's (or group of leaders') credibility stands on not just one, but three legs; when any one of those three legs is broken or even wobbly, trust quickly erodes; a leader's credibility is called into question, and the church's health is compromised.

These three legs are character, competence, and communication.

1. Character.

This component of trust is the most obvious, and the one that is most often singularly equated with trust. Character can be defined as a leader's sense of moral fortitude, an inner compass that determines how a person acts when no one else is looking, and it is often described externally as a person's reputation. In ministry, there is no dispute that great leaders are people of good repute who exhibit strong,

godly character. A person of weak character, on the other hand, will by definition be dishonest or double-tongued.

2. Competence.

Even if a leader demonstrates honest and trustworthy character, he or she might not be competent for the task at hand. In Tom's case, he was an amazing and truly inspiring visionary, but he was not at all gifted in the areas of strategy and day-to-day execution. In these areas, Tom was not trustworthy. It's not that he was dishonest, but he was unreliable—not as deep-seated as a true character flaw, but a variation of untrustworthiness nonetheless. As a result, even though his character was above reproach, trust in his leadership began to break down.

3. Communication.

The final leg of trust is communication, and in my experience, this is often the most easily overlooked element of trust, because it exist at the most basic, everyday level of leadership. But it is precisely because it exists at such a basic level that communication is so foundational to leadership trust.

If a leader does not communicate well (and by "well" I mean with honesty and frequency at all levels in the organization and along all stages of an issue or task), colleagues and congregation alike will start to wonder if a deeper problem exists. And it is this first question that starts to weaken the foundation of trust.

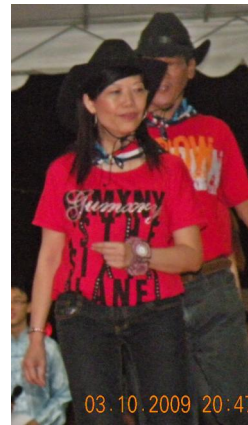
Now, one incident of mis- (or missing) communication generally isn't enough to cast a cloud over otherwise impeccable character and competence. However, a pattern of spotty communication allows doubts to surface: "If Pastor is not communicating about this, what else is he withholding from us?" Trust erodes, and eventually character itself gets called into question.

I know of more than one ministry leader who has been accused of deception (which is a character issue), when the entire problem could have been avoided with more diligent communication around the matter at hand, be it a fundraising campaign or other financial matter, a moral issue, or the process of change within the church. In Tom's case, his communication "sin" was one of omission; fortunately, he recognized the problem in time to reverse most, although not all, of the damage that had been done to that point.

For most leaders, as with Tom, the first step is simply awareness. As a ministry leader, recognize the importance of trust. Next, learn the difference between the three legs, and their different roles in facilitating trust. Finally, learn to recognize when one or more of the legs are broken or in danger of breaking down in your

ministry, and how to repair them. The result will be a stronger foundation, a healthier church, and greater ministry effectiveness.

Adapted from Leadership journal, © 2006 Christianity Today International



Children's Day / Lantern Festival



Taman Jurong Zone C RC)

Jurong Christian Church and Taman Jurong Zone C RC jointly organized the Mid Autumn Festival cum Children's Day Celebrations at The Chinese Garden on the evening of 3rd October 2009.

Our senior pastor, Revd Dr William Chang graced the occasion together with Mr Goh Peng Tong (PBM, Chairman Taman Jurong Citizen Consultative Committee) and Mr Christopher Wang (PBM, Chairman

Revd Dr William Chang addressed the participants:

“JCC has been part of the Taman Jurong community for the last 42 years. Over the years we have been involved in the community in only small ways. We have always felt as part of the community and desired to do more to help needy residents and do our little part for community building.

“This event – The Mid Autumn Festival and Children's Day Celebrations – is a good start for us to celebrate and affirm our common identity and bond, as citizens of Singapore and as residents and friends of the Taman Jurong Community.

“Tradition has it that Rebels used the Mid Autumn Festival as a method to convey their plans for revolt. They ordered the baking of special cakes to commemorate the festival. But what the Mongols and their leaders didn't know was that secret messages were tucked into the cakes and distributed to allied rebels. On the night of the festival, the rebels successfully attacked, overthrowing the Mongol government and establishing a new era, the Ming Dynasty.

“Therefore the message of Mooncake Festival is one of patriotism – which means love for one's country, which means love for one's community, which means love for one's family. At this mid-autumn night, we celebrate and affirm these values together.”

The message about the mid-autumn festival resonated with everyone. Those filling the tent to overflowing included locals and foreigners with diverse backgrounds; but all were there with a shared joyful celebration spirit. Regardless of whether they were Chinese or non-Chinese, Singaporean or non-Singaporean, Taman Jurong residents or non-Taman Jurong residents, Jurong Christian Church members or non-members, young or old, they happily participated in the games, contests and fun draws with prizes for the winners – one of the great draw prizes being a luxurious bicycle which was won by a young lady.

It was good that the fun of a traditional Chinese festival could be shared with people of all ilks. The organizers put across their points on the significance of celebration with singing and a Cantonese opera, and little children from Jurong Christian Church kindergarten lent their Children's Day exuberance to put up two interesting performances. When it was announced that Hokkien Songs CDs produced by our Hokkien ministry were available free for those interested, many among the spectators stepped out to get one for themselves. The night was an opportunity for us to learn much about reaching out to all and sundry, and surely we will improve further on a great job by the hardworking committee behind this Mid-Autumn Festival cum Children's Day Celebrations.



The Dialect Ministry did a last minute recording of some Hokkien songs with the help of Joseph and a team of helpers to burn about 150 pieces of CDs. As far as we know more than 70 CDs were handed out to all and sundry. May the seeds we have planted bring about a Hokkien Harvest.

This event was far from perfect. There were many mistakes made and many lessons to learn from this experience. If we had not tried it, we would not have known that we could carry it out, eg like the recording of Dialect songs in-house. Now we hope that we have the confidence to do such a large scale project again but better.

The Editors

Platinum tips for young greenhorns

Continuing from the last issue, John Lee's version of INVESTING

"An Example of a Stock Market Gameplay"

Many variations of dire scenarios with big-time investors (let alone novices) getting entrapped can be gleaned if only you keep your ears and eyes open in the grapevine or the media. Small-time retail punters are especially vulnerable to the deception of the penny price (thinking that there is not much room for it to go down, so it can only go up). You don't have to be a trader to check the stock market information publicly available. Many penny stocks have prices going down to half a cent and staying there for years, trapping investors' money in it indefinitely as there are no buyers even if anyone is willing to sell at the rock-bottom price. There were times that such low stock prices suddenly saw movement and gave fresh hope to new punters to enter the fray in the hope of a windfall for every uptick in price (which can be very substantial percentage-wise). Wretchedly, a brutal bull trap was being laid and the price abruptly u-turned. If it would be a huge percentage gain for every uptick, it became a massive thrashing for the unfortunate punter (most likely greenhorns!) More often than not, because of the very "affordable" price per share and the "excellent" potential returns, inexperienced punters make huge bets and suffer a proportionate loss beyond measure. In short, they get mauled, traumatized and may even become suicidal, especially when mired in debt, pursued by creditors and finding no way out.

A fall after a killing

How would you feel when you play the stock market and make a killing? In the first place, why did you play? Obviously, to make money, right? That being your motive, would you give up once you find that the profit is easy to make, and the quantum is not what you can ever dream of by any other form of investment? Making a killing would give you euphoria, a light-headedness that makes you float your aim higher. Winning in the stock market looks easy with your skill. Temptations would rise sky-high. You would tell yourself, "If only I had betted a bit, just a bit, more!" You see the market in your favour and you self-congratulate that you have acquired the skill to outplay other punters. Pride goes before a mighty fall, and you will soon lose all that you have gained, and more. Hopefully, you still keep a shred of your shirt and pants. This is not much different from betting in a casino. What I can tell you is that the probability of losing is certainly many times more than the probability of winning at every "throw of the dice" in the stock market. Let me explain by the following illustration.

Simply a game of pouring water

(You pour water into my glass, I pour into yours. Play on until all is spilt and no more is left in the glasses.)



There are 5 glasses of water, each representing a market player and the water in the glass represents the amount of money invested. Let's say you are represented by one of the glasses. You hope that the water in your glass will rise; and for each occasion it does, the increase in volume must come from the other glasses. (For every significant increase, there must be a number of losers who contribute to your increase.) As you understand, you can't always expect to see the water in your glass rising. There are times it rises, then falls, then rises, rises, falls, falls ... When do you call it quits and withdraw your glass from play?

Chances are good that when the water level falls, you bank on your holding power to wait for it to rise again. On the other hand, when the water level rises, you feel the rush of hope that it will rise a bit more and so you wait a little longer before calling it quits. Emotions! Archetypical Emotions!

You are smarter than most of your contemporaries; you decide to play short positions instead of long positions (i.e., you take profit frequently, getting in and out of the market every now and then as some "expert trading instructors" advise). **Doing so, you look more like a speculator than a true-blue investor.**

Beware! Each time water is poured in or out of the glass, there is a definite spillage – water that flows somewhere except into a glass. The spilled water goes to stockbrokers (commissions), government (7% GST on supplies), Stock Exchange (Trading fee) and other fees where appropriate. Imagine that the number of glasses is not five, but 5 multiplied thousands of times, representing the population of players in the market. Water poured into glasses, water poured out, the whole pouring game takes place repeatedly and the water spillage happens each time water is poured in or out. It is only a matter of time when the water (i.e. liquidity – a more classy term for the liquid called "water", which the Cantonese understand very well as "cash") dries up. You need more liquid (liquidity) to be

pumped in for the water-pouring game to continue; some players wisely quit playing (nursing their losses; at least they still keep some water at home available for drinking and sustaining life), but others more adventurously put more water into their stock-market glasses with the hope of recouping their losses. (Characteristic gambler's mentality.) Of course, the only people who have high confidence of winning all the time are those who earn your commissions each time you BUY or SELL regardless of whether you gain or lose. So now you know in whose glasses monies pumped into the stock market usually end up.

Can it be true that more trading glasses gain water than lose water?

Remember that for every significant winner with a trading glass filled up, there must be nine losers with their glasses emptied. (十賭九輸) Don't believe? Ask around among your peers (choose at random 10 of them who play the stock market) and see how many tell you they win or lose money. Chances are that the result of your investigation will prove me right! If all or the vast majority of them tell you that they are making money, you know it can't be true unless the following cases apply:

- 1) Yours is a biased sample, not random.
- 2) Your peers are invested in stocks that enjoy real economic growth whereby water is added into the glasses from the company's economic gains and not from speculators pouring water from their glasses.

By the illustration, if economic growth is not pervasive, it defies logic that many glasses can enjoy rises in water levels when few if any glasses lose much water. On the first point above, I would like to say to those who have studied statistics at 'A' Level that it has been shown that "the distribution of stock market returns is usually not normal but leptokurtic."¹ Unlike a normal distribution, a leptokurtic distribution is fat-tailed; which means that the stock market returns are highly volatile, highly unpredictable. (Has any trader ever made the right prediction consistently? More often than not, a trader makes the right prediction once and the wrong predictions nine times. Finally tally: MISERY!) In the face of such statistical validation of kurtosis, can it be real that a random sample of market players would produce a majority-winning situation?

More to come in the next 2 issues of The Vine. If you read it to the end you will be reminded of Ecclesiastes, "Meaningless, just a chasing after the wind."

¹ http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5485/is_199904/ai_n21442940/pg_2/

Over a Cup of Instant Noodles

After returning from Europe where autumn was arriving just as I saying farewell, what was more heated than the humid and warm air of Singapore, was the meeting at a recent Pulse Summit. I regrettably missed that time of sharing and upon reading the minutes, realized that some youth leaders find that spiritual witnessing is something that apparently applies chiefly to mature Christians and those who are walking right with God.

This is contradictory to what I had just discussed with a group of youth leaders in Geneva where we agreed that baptism has made us one body in Christ and no one is more superior than another in the Spirit. Another stumbling block to spiritual witnessing is the fact that a sizeable number of youth leaders have expressed the need to feel more loved in the spiritual community that we are in.



This is an alarm bell sounding so loud that it threatens to burst my ear drums. If within a Christian community of regular church-goers, it is possible to feel unloved, would it be possible to go out into the world which we claim to lack the love of Christ and try to flood our Saviour's love with it?

As Black-eyed Peas have sang it, "Where is the love?"

Lately, one youth asked me if I love different people in varied extent at different points. Very quickly, I have to agree that I have. As fallible human beings, it is so easy to fall into the temptation of loving those who love us back and giving up on those who do not reciprocate with the same degree.

It is always easy to look at the speck in others' eyes while missing the log in mine. It takes conscious effort in reminding myself that I cannot change others or expect them to function according to my expectations so the only thing I can do, is to change myself. This advice was dished out to me by another youth. This shows that God can speak through anyone and re-affirms that God's gifts are presented to people regardless of their age. Hence, spiritual witnessing need not be limited to people whose brains are overflowing with Bible knowledge and have spent more hours warming the seats in the sanctuary.

Perhaps the reason why spiritual witnessing sounds like a tall mountain to climb, is the lack of understanding of what it means to bear spiritual witness. I do not attempt to further baffle or complicate the term but hope that upon sharing my experience with Alexis, others may see that spiritual witnessing is as simple as telling your friends how tasty that ramen in that Japanese restaurant is. There is no need to guarantee that the revenue in the restaurants soar with 200% increase after your recommendation. It is as simple as sharing the pleasure you have experienced at a meal to people you care enough so that they can relish the same joy of eating that warm bowl of delicious ramen.

Having ranted enough, I shall share the joy that Alexis and I experienced as we marvel at God's amazing works at an Italian coastal town. We arrived at this town and first met Josèe, a lady who lives in Montreal, Canada, in our dormitory room. She was feeling unwell and was resting in the room when we arrived. Alexis extended her warmth and took the initiative to offer her charcoal pills to help ease her stomach discomfort. The kind act helped to till the soil for seeds of friendship to be sown.

Later that evening, as we were preparing to leave for dinner, she remarked that she has not been eating well and wished she could have some chicken noodles. By the grace of God, I had a cup of seafood noodles that she was willing to accept. She was so touched by the providence and agreed to join us for dinner where we spent a couple of hours sharing about our lives.

Through the conversation, we realized that she was brought up in a Roman Catholic home and believes in angels. We also manage to share that we were Protestants. Apart from these titles, we did not talk very much about our religious beliefs for the rest of the night but we certainly bonded with the other topics that were discussed.

In the middle of the night, I heard Josèe exclaimed, "good, good, good", in her sleep. This was weird because she normally spoke French and would probably dream in that language. When she woke up, she excitedly shared that Alexis and I visited her in Canada and she was overjoyed. That explained the English expression that was uttered while she was still in slumber land.

We shared some time having breakfast together that morning before we agreed to go our separate ways that morning. However, Josèe changed her mind and returned to the room to ask if she could join us for the day instead. We agreed and departed for another beautiful town called Positano.

As we were walking along the narrow alleys of Positano, Josèe popped us a surprise question, “What is the difference between a Protestant and a Catholic?”.

Delighted by her invitation to share our beliefs, we explained as best as we can and focused on Christ being the intercessor for us through His death and His desire to have an intimate relationship with us. She agreed that she is not keen on having to confess through a priest and we agreed that this beautiful world that we live in cannot have existed without the work of a wise Creator. Later, she also asked about the main religious belief in Singapore and we briefly discussed the teachings of Buddhism.

While we spent more time chatting, Josèe shared that she believed that the encounter was a divine appointment by a greater being. Alexis and I firmly think so too especially since Josèe returned to the town to retrieve her luggage that she has lost a year ago.

We trust that God will continue to speak to her and as we maintain contact through email, I personally hope that I would be sensitive to sharing the wonderful works of God in my life so that she would develop a hunger and desire for our Heavenly Father who would cause the seed in her to grow.

In my limited understanding, this is spiritual witnessing. It is about sharing my life and not about launching into baffling theological speeches. Referring back to the analogy of sharing about your favourite bowl of ramen, we do not talk about the flour that goes into making those noodles but simply about its taste as it slurp it strand after strand. In the same way, when we bear witness for Christ, it is basically talking about tasting the goodness of God in our lives. At the end of the day, the verdict is up to the hearer to decide if it is his/her cup of tea at that point in time.

Dr. David Geisler shared about witnessing over a cup of tea. We did it over cup noodles. What is on your menu?

Mindy Yeo



Opposing God's Leadership

by Os Hillman

"The anger of the LORD burned against them, and he left them" (Num 12:9).

Beware of trying to depose a leader that God has raised in your midst. Leaders are placed by God in business, government, churches - almost every place where leaders are required. When God places a person in position of authority, it is a grievous sin to go against that leadership. God Himself opposes those who come against His leadership.

God's leaders are not perfect. They make mistakes. That is why following a leader can require a faith that goes beyond faith in the leader. Our faith lies in the God who elevated the leader to his or her position.

Miriam and Aaron, the older brother and sister of Moses, had a family dispute about Moses' wife, who was an Ethiopian and Cushite. She most likely was a black woman. We do not know the nature of the dispute, but it was a typical family conflict.



However, the family conflict began to impact God's agenda for a nation. They were now meddling in God's business. And He did not like that in the least. God literally brought Aaron and Miriam into the switching house. He judged both Miriam and Aaron for their rebellion against His ordained leader. "Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (Num 12:8).

Miriam was stricken with leprosy and had it not been for Moses' appeal on her behalf, she would have been cast out for good. God gave her a second chance but it required being cast away from the camp for seven days. Miriam and Aaron repented for their rebellion.

If you struggle with a leader that God has over you, pray for that leader. If God wants to remove that leader, He can do it. Think twice about conspiring to remove a leader whom God has not chosen to remove yet.